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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 006736

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NSC FOR DORAN AND WATERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/06/2016

TAGS: PREL PGOV PHUM KDEM EG

SUBJECT: MFA PROTESTS USG COMMENTS ON SADAT CONVICTION

REF: A. CAIRO 6600

1B. CAIRO 6294

Classified By: DCM Stuart Jones, for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

11. (C) On November 2, in a conversation with Assistant Minister for Americas Salama Shaker, DCM expressed USG concern over the sentencing of MP Talaat El Sadat to one year of hard labor (ref A), citing the November 1 statements of Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Sean McCormack. Shaker, noting her surprise that the U.S. would "support" Sadat, promised to convey USG views to FM Ahmed Aboul Gheit. DCM clarified that the USG does not support Sadat personally, but rather his right to criticize the government. On November 5, Shaker called Ambassador, under instructions from FM Aboul Gheit (then with President Mubarak in China) to protest that the spokesman's comments to the media on the Sadat case are "unacceptable" and "very offensive to the Government and people of Egypt."

12. (C) Comment: The conviction of Sadat in a military trial has not resulted in a public outcry in Egypt. Even democracy advocates, while privately lamenting the blow to freedom of speech and due process, have not raised their voices publicly in Sadat's defense. As reported reftel, Sadat is widely viewed as an unpredictable maverick without a significant political constituency. He evidently crossed not only Egyptian legal lines, but also public opinion standards, when he conducted a series of interviews, including regional satellite TV, to charge Mubarak (by name) and the military leadership, with complicity in Anwar El Sadat's assassination (ref B).

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